

AN EMPLOYER BRANDING THROUGH DIGITAL PLATFORM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE JOB SEEKERS PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYER BRAND

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ABSTRACT

The study mainly focuses on understanding the effectiveness of branding done by the employer through the company website and social networking site, what sought of an influence it has on the job seekers perception of employer brand taking respondents demographic factors into consideration. Aspects like accessibility, credibility, user-friendly, responsiveness, accuracy, transparency and future reference were taken into consideration. Respondents were asked to give the feedback on the above-mentioned aspects in relation to looking for job search or for seeking information about the employer for understanding the employer's credibility through the company website and social networking site.

Data for the study was collected through primary source by questionnaire and secondary data through research articles for understanding the previous research in the area. Analysis of the study was done through quantitative method, with a sample size of 300 respondents. Non-probability sampling method and convenient sampling were adopted for choosing the sample size required for the study. Data were analysed using SPSS 20 and correlation test was done to understand the factors that had a major influence on the job seekers perception of the employer based on the employers branding through an online platform and ANOVA test to understand the influence of demographic factors on perception of respondents about the online presence of an employer at a significance level of 0.05.

Based on the outcome of the study it could be inferred that aspects those mainly influenced the job seekers perception of employer branding through digital platform were user-friendly, responsive, and accessibility for getting information followed by future preference, transparency, credibility and accuracy. The results of the ANOVA test clearly stated that demographic factors did have a major influence on job seekers perception out of which work experience of the job seekers influenced the most followed by age and gender of the respondents.

KEYWORDS: Employer Attractiveness, Job Seekers, Employer Branding, Social Networking Site & Perception

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INTRODUCTION

Intense competition in the industry has made it crucial for the companies to have high visibility for their brand in the market. Branding has emerged as a key tool to create brand awareness, brand identity, elucidates to customers the value-added benefit of buying a product. The dearth in availability and difficulty in finding the right candidate for the job profile has made, the employer's to consider and promote themselves as an ideal brand in order to get the potential candidates with required Knowledge, skill and ability. Employer branding is a key strategy which is adopted by most of the companies to gain job seekers attention with quality credentials.

Employer branding from an organization perspective includes promoting nature of work culture, emphasizing on employer contribution towards career growth of employees, highlighting on employer value proportion and various related benefits of being associated with an employer. Technological advancement has its

effect on almost all the industry and human resource is no exception to the same. Employers these days are following the footsteps of digital marketing by mobilizing the Information technology as a platform to promote themselves to gain the attention of job seekers. Few of the IT platform used for employer branding is through social networking website, company website by positing existing employees' experience with the company, providing a glimpse of the company work culture through videos, blogs etc. Branding strategies adopted by the company for effective recruitment cannot be generalized as it mainly depends on the demographics they would be focusing on which is varied, based on gender, age, work experience, generation to which the job seekers belong to and the perception they develop towards an employer.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Employer Attractiveness through Social Media: A Phenomenological Study

Author: Chetna Priyadarshini, YLN Kumar, Rajneesh RanjanJha (2017)

The objective of this paper is to understand the employer's brand image on the social media and its impact on the job seekers perception of the employer. The researcher has used an interpretative phenomenological technique to analyse the respondent's perception. Respondents were divided into focus groups and their response was collected in the form of audio script and transcribed form. During the study factors that emerged as a result of response were person job fair, person organisation fit, reliability and timeliness, positive and cost effective marketing value creation of employers and privacy concern. Based on the outcome of the study it is understood that respondents found it easy to access information about the company through social networking sites. They felt online platform to be quite compatible to compare and navigate through various company websites. Most of the respondents agreed to the information provided on the website helps in ascertaining match between employee and organization and also company information displayed on the website to be credible and takes less time in getting information from prospective source.

2. Generation Y: Using Social Media for Job Search

Author: Tatiana Titus, Fabian Armendariz (2016)

An exploratory study of how the generation Y job seekers use social media to fulfil their job search needs. The purpose of this research paper is to understand the usage of social media among generation Y job seekers and if companies can use social media as a platform to attract this generation of employees. The qualitative research method was adopted for data collection as graduate students underwent an in depth interview. The outcome of the study states that although generation Y job seekers do not completely rely on social networking site for job search, but still they accepted the fact of the job seeking process through a social site to be convenient and easy to access. Respondents agreed to have professionally maintained their social accounts as they are aware about companies going through these accounts to understand the job seekers profile and identity. Job seekers, consciousness of censoring their account indicates that they do use social media as an avenue to seek and understand the details of employers. This indicates the importance of employer branding through social media.

3. Job Seekers Perception of Employer Brand Attractiveness on Social Media in Gaza Strip

Author: Nariman Khalid Ajjur, Dr. Sami Ali Abo Al-Ross (2016)

The purpose of this research was to discuss the importance of social media in promoting an employer as a brand and job seekers perception towards the same. The researcher has adopted a descriptive, analytical approach for the study and 400 respondents seeking job opportunity were considered for the study. Parameters such as security, employer

attractiveness, responsiveness, type of social media used for branding was taken into consideration to understand the respondent's perception towards employer branding. The outcome of the study substantiated the impact of above mentioned parameters and to what extent it influenced the perception of job seekers. Author states that the companies should try and promote themselves through different types of social media and that importance to be given to maintaining the company website as most of the job seekers agree to have visited the official company website for getting information about a job opening and also to explore the organization culture.

4. Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites“An Explorative Research towards the Benefits and Limitations of Social Networking Usage for Employer Branding Purposes”

Author: Lisanne Nijhuis(2016)

Research paper attempts to understand the effectiveness of social networking website as a platform for promoting employer branding. Study mainly attempts to understand the benefits associated with using SNW for employer branding, possible problems that could be faced by the organizations, conditions under which SNW would hold good for employer branding and also how SNW can be effectively utilized for promoting the employer brand image of an organization. The exploratory research method was adapted for the study and data was collected through in depth interview, Delphi technique was used to rank the various factors based on its importance for considering SNW for employer branding. Based on the outcome of the study author states that employer branding should be explored as a long term strategy for employer brand building and content for the same could be in the form of stories, blogs, videos, experience of employees with the company. The researcher also highlights some of the possible limitations of SNW which could be posting negative messages about the company, lack of job seekers attention to the message of employer which may reduce the impact of branding messages.

5. Employer Branding from an Attraction to a Core HR Strategy

Author: Professor Paul Sparrow and Dr. Lilian Otae (2015)

The purpose of this paper is to project the importance of employer branding to help organization to balance between the job seekers perception of employer brand and the actual brand image and identity of the employer. Organization these days focus on utilizing a marketing strategy of branding to attract potential job seekers in the market. Data for the study is collected through secondary source from various researches conducted on employer branding in various countries. The outcome of the study states that the brand value proportion of an employer is based on brand image, the image of the product marketed by the company. Author mainly emphasizes on aspects of communication and how important it is for the companies to communicate about their organizational culture, work practices, employers support, extended to employees for their career growth. The study emphasizes that employees play a key role in employer branding and that companies have to focus on internal marketing to keep their employees informed about the company culture and up gradation.

6. Social Media – The Challenges and Future Direction of the Recruitment Process in HRM Area

Author: Beata Hysa, Anna Mularczyk, Iwona Zdonek (2015)

The study emphasized on understanding the challenges and usage of social media for HR functions in the company from employers and job applicant's perspective. 150 respondents were chosen for the study and a closed ended questionnaire was circulated to get the response, collected data was analysed through quantitative method of research. Based on the outcome of the study it could be inferred that most of the respondents agree to use social media for job

search, as they found social media to be convenient to access information about job openings and also get detailed information about the employer. Only 40 % respondents agreed to have used LinkedIn and Goldenline for job search. Apart from depending on SNW for job search, respondents were of opinion that social networking site is a good platform to develop professional contacts. It was also emphasized that there should be certain policies for using social media by employees as it may give them an opportunity to write negative comments about the employer which may affect the employer brand image in the long run.

7. Legal and Ethical Consideration for Social Media Hiring Practices in the Workplace

Author: Andrew S Hazelton. Ashley Terhorst (2015)

The objective of the research was to understand the impact of social media on recruitment practices followed by the companies and also legal aspects to be taken into account when exclusively using social media for employee search in the company. The outcome of the study indicates that most of the employers have been using social media for recruitment process where employers have been screening candidates profile through Facebook, Twitter and job seekers agreed to have professionally maintained their accounts like LinkedIn and other professional networking sites to sound appealing to the employer. The study emphasizes on the legal issues that have to be considered when recruiting through social media such as authenticity of job seeker profile, multiple accounts if maintained by the job applicant. The organization often encourages their employees to post videos, write blogs about their experience with the organization, but experts in this practice of branding are of opinion that it could be risky if employees misuse this platform to spread a negative image about the employer and in no time the market reputation of the company could be at stake. To conclude with the research author states that companies should have some norms and policies in terms of using social networking site and should levy certain restrictions on employees when they post comments or write blogs about the organization.

8. Social Media in Employer Brand Communication

Author: Pham, Thanh (2015)

The research paper emphasizes on the concept of employer branding and how it has proved to be a crux for companies in order to attract talented and skilled employees to apply for a job. Author states that although there are many platforms through which the companies can do employer branding, still social networking site has emerged as a key tool due to technological innovation and boon in digitalisation. The qualitative research method is used for the study as the author has attempted to substantiate the use of social media through the case study method, primary data required for the research were collected through case study and secondary data was collected from the company website and related blogs. Based on the outcome of the study author is of the opinion that employees should be encouraged to post videos, write blogs about their experience with the employer and at the same time companies should have a mechanism to monitor about the content posted by employees about the employer on social networking website.

9. The Effect of Social Media on Employer Branding

Author: Shweta Tiwari (2015)

The research aims at understanding the impact of employer branding through social media, students, managers and job seekers were chosen as respondents and data was collected through interview method. Few of the major objectives of the study were to understand about the awareness towards the concept of employer branding from an employer perspective, to understand what aspects of employer branding influences the job seekers and if the brand image of the

company has an influence of organizational culture. Based on the outcome of the study it could be inferred that SNW was explored by managers, employees and students understand about the potential employer and what could be the possible benefits of being associated with them. The author states that companies should utilize their employees to promote their brand by actively posting their experience with the employer and also employer has to be quick and reciprocate to positive as well as negative message posted about the company on social networking site.

10. Social Networking Website in Job Search and Employee Recruitment

Author: Ioannis Nikolaou (2014)

The study aimed at the role of social networking website and importance given by them to it for job search and the second aspect of the study on preferred social networking site by recruiter to hire potential candidates. The outcome of the study stated that job aspirants preferred traditional method of job search compare to social site as they found these sources to be authentic and reliable. It was also inferred that young job seekers and HR managers spent a lot of time on social networking site which may be taken as an indication that social networking site may be considered by the present generation for job search. The second aspect of the study states that recruiters preferred linked In comparison to other social networking sites for screening candidate profile and looking for potential candidates. The findings of the study do emphasize on the importance of social networking site and that it may emerge as a potential platform for both job seekers as well as employers in the long run.

11. Paradigm Shift in HR Practices on Employee Life Cycle Due to Influence of Social Media

Author: Dr. Asha Nagendra (2014)

The study focused on understanding the impact of social media on HR functions of companies and various sources of social media those have been of prominent use. The researcher has adopted a quantitative method for the study; feedback was collected from 100 employees who were either HR manager or employees working for HR department. Respondents chosen for the study were from IT companies or were employed in the service industry. The outcome of the study indicated that Facebook and Twitter were majorly used by job seekers specially the generation Y employees and Naukri, Monster was used for the job search process. HR managers agreed on using social media to network with professionals, for recruitment and training process. Respondents found social media to be a reliable platform for recruitment and screening the credentials of the job applicant, in fact, they stated that it's easy to have access to a larger pool of candidates for recruitment process. HR managers stated that social networking site will definitely emerge as a platform for employer branding. Based on the respondent's opinion, it could be inferred that the companies should also follow the traditional recruitment practices with social networking site as job applicant cannot be assessed based on interaction with them on social networking site.

12. Employer Branding through Social Media in Generation Y Context

Author: Iulia Kolesnicov (2014)

The study is based on exploring employer branding through social media for generation Y employees; it is a part of on-going research work and is based on a combination of empirical and qualitative research method. The Author has considered employees of IT sector as respondents of the study and also few case studies based on the previous research done in similar areas. Research mainly attempts on understanding if the employers have to adapt a different brand communication strategy for generation Y employees and certain parameters considered for the study were job search,

self-efficacy, job search methods, ideal job and ideal employer. Based on the outcome of the study it could be observed that employer job construct had a major influence on branding compare to other factors and communication about an employer in the form of videos, blogs, comments, related posting were watched by the job seekers and communication strategy adapted by employer should be different for different generation of employees as perspective and weightage give by job seekers for factors during job search process varied depending on the generation they belong to.

13. What is the Future of Employer Branding through Social Media

Author: Axinia Elena (2011)

The author attempts to understand if social media is a potential platform for employer branding. With intense competition for the right hire in the job market companies have been exploring employer branding to attract potential job seekers and also retain their talented employees in the company. The digital revolution has had its impact on every industry and recruitment process in Human resource management is no exception to the same. Researcher considered academicians as respondents for the study, data were collected through questionnaires and in depth interview followed by quantitative analysis of the data. The outcome of the study states that employees' perception of employer brand was influenced by the employees' presence on social networking site to a certain extent and that branding through social networking site would definitely emerge as a prominent platform for employer branding in future.

14. Social Media as a Mechanism for Engagement

Author: Emma Parry and Adriano Solidoro (2013)

The study focuses on the effectiveness of using social media for engagement of employees, as employees from two different countries from the UK that is a few sets of employees from television industry and few of them from telecommunication industry were interviewed based on which a case study was developed based on the concept of usage of social media for employee engagement. The outcome of the study emphasizes that social media can be used for engagement of internal and potential employees, but it condition to organize being ready for the same. The author states that although company intends to promote employee engagement through social media its major focus should be on employees, organization culture and not completely on technological aspect of it.

15. Using Social Media in Recruitment Process

The study attempts to investigate the role of social media in recruitment process, employers and job seeker's perspective towards the same. Based on the outcome of the survey, it could be inferred that with revolution of the internet and social media most of the job seekers explore information about job opportunity, employer information either through the company website or social networking site, whereas only 10% of respondents still relied on the traditional method of job source. Respondents stated that social networking sites help in developing communities of like-minded people which helps in knowledge sharing and be abreast with changes and development in the industry. Employers agreed to have used social networking site for the recruitment process and also to screen employer's profile. Research even aimed at understanding various reasons for which job seekers used social networking site and it could be inferred that job applicants mainly surfed networking site to get information about the employer, organization culture, career opportunities and profiles of existing employees. Researcher concludes stating that employers can make effective use of social networking platform for recruitment process, but at the same should not completely rely on the same for the recruitment process. As employers screen job seeker profile on social networking site it is advisable for job applicants to professionally maintain

their profile.

RESEARCH GAP

Based on the review of previous research conducted on social networking we can observe that most of the studies attempted to understand employer branding as a tool for quality recruitment which was more from an employer's perspective. On the basis of the research gap the research paper attempts to understand the various reasons which influence job seekers to opt for job search through social networking site and company websites and also the presence of employer on social networking and its influence of job applicant's perception of employer brand.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Hiring the right candidate for the right job is proving to be quite challenging for the recruiters, with intense competition in the job market candidates with apt credentials often tend to join companies for reasons such as career growth, salary package, employer's reputation etc. Employer branding has emerged as a strategy which is adopted by most of the companies to project themselves as an ideal employer and it is done through various platforms and Digital platform is one among them. The study attempts to understand the impact on the job seekers perception of an employer brand based on their presence in social networking site and their company website.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The outcome of the study can be used by companies across varied industry that have been doing employer branding through digital platform or the organization who are yet to explore this medium for company branding. Research emphasizes on various reasons that influence job applicants consider digital platform for job search, these aspects can be taken into consideration when strategizing employer branding for their respective organization.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To understand the effectiveness of branding through digital platform and its impact on the job seekers perception of employer brand.
- To understand the various reasons that influence job applicants use the digital platform for job search.
- To understand the influence of respondents demographic factor on respondent's preference towards a digital platform for job search.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive Research

Sampling Type: Non Probability Sampling

Sampling Technique: Convenience Sampling

Sample Size: 300

Tool: Structured Questionnaire

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The time period for conducting the study was limited, which confines the scope of a detailed research.
- Respondents for the study were chosen from various industry due to which the research may not be able to suggest specific branding strategy based on individual industry.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Dimension On Mean	Dimension on Std. Deviation	Rank
Job openings posted on company websites and social media are easily accessible	300	3.8300	.75032			
It is easy to get information about the companies that have active presence on SNW	300	4.3800	.90461			
SNW helps to get detailed information about the company compared to job portals and paper advertisements	300	3.9500	.97502			
SNW and company websites helps in networking with current employees and get valid feedback	300	4.6300	.65920	4.1975	0.8222875	III
Company Information displayed on social media are accurate and reliable	300	3.4000	1.28276			
Companies provide genuine information about employee welfare, training and development activities which help us to predict our career growth	300	2.9000	1.34761			
Value proportion of the employer can be assessed based on the	300	4.3300	1.08860			

visibility of their website and presence on SNW						
Companies which are active on SNW are credible	300	3.8600	1.38085	3.6225	1.274955	VI
It is easy to review and compare the employers online as we can navigate through different company websites	300	4.5700	.68312			
Reviewing employer through website and their presence on SNW saves time	300	4.5300	.71470			
Applying and reviewing employers online can be done anywhere irrespective of our physical presence	300	4.4900	.95548			
SNW and company websites are user friendly as they direct the candidate during search process	300	4.4100	.86278	4.5	0.80402	I
Social media, company websites facilitates us to chat with existing employees of the company	300	4.0400	1.11469			
I prefer company that has an active chat box to respond to query of job seekers	300	4.5000	.98653			
I prefer organizations that update about the job openings and their upcoming event on SNW	300	4.3000	1.03614			
Job search through company website and SNW helps in following constant review of people about the companies	300	4.2600	1.04693	4.275	1.046073	II
SNW and company websites provide a true	300	3.2800	1.39574			

picture of employers market reputation						
Information about job vacancy provided on company website and SNW are genuine and reliable compare to job portal	300	3.9100	1.11627			
Review and rating of companies on company sites and SNW are genuine	300	3.6400	.95574	3.61	1.155917	VII
SNW and company website provide a true picture of work environment	300	3.2700	1.38691			
Companies websites and SNW genuinely communicate about a company's performance	300	3.6700	.95085			
Videos and blogs of employees experience with the companies are based on their true experience	300	4.3300	.88528	3.756667	1.074347	V
I feel inclined to apply for job in the company those are active on SNW	300	4.5000	.90150			
I prefer to be associated with the company that has a strong presence on SNW and respond to job seekers query	300	3.8100	1.23246	4.155	1.06698	IV
Valid N (list wise)	300					

Table 1.1: Ranking Importance of Aspects of Digital Platform

Aspects of Digital Platform for Job Search	Respondents 300	
	Mean	Rank
User friendly	4.5	I
Responsive	4.275	II
Accessibility	4.1975	III
Future preference	4.155	IV
Transparency	3.756667	V
Credibility	3.6225	VI
Accuracy	3.61	VII

From the tables 1 and 1.1 it can be inferred that Job applicant mainly preferred digital platform for job search as they find it to be user friendly, responsive to job seekers' queries, comfortable in terms of accessing information related to job and employer followed by future preference to user digital platform for the above mentioned reasons. Respondents expect the information on the company website and social networking site to be more transparent as they find it to be ambiguous due to which they have ranked credibility and accuracy of job related information available on social networking site compared to other aspects considered for the study.

HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1

H₀: there is no association between job seeker's age and their preference towards companies which do employer branding through digital platform.

H_A: there is an association between job seeker's age and their preference towards companies which do employer branding through digital platform.

Table 2: ANOVA

I prefer to be associated with the company that has a strong presence on SNW and respond to job seekers query.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	40.708	4	10.177	7.261	**.000
Within Groups	413.462	295	1.402		
Total	454.170	299			

From the above table it can be inferred that there is an association between job seekers age and their preference towards companies which do employer branding through digital platform as ($P = .000 < 0.01$).

Hypothesis 2

H₀: there is no association between respondent's age and respondent's opinion about companies branding through social networking site being credible.

H_A: there is an association between respondent's age and respondent's opinion about companies branding through social networking site being credible.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Company Information displayed on social media are accurate and reliable	Between Groups	24.303	4	6.076	3.832	**.005
	Within Groups	467.697	295	1.585		
	Total	492.000	299			
Value proportion of the employer can be assessed based on the visibility of their website and presence on SNW	Between Groups	11.316	4	2.829	2.433	*.048
	Within Groups	343.014	295	1.163		
	Total	354.330	299			
Companies which are active on SNW are credible	Between Groups	31.618	4	7.905	4.330	**.002
	Within Groups	538.502	295	1.825		
	Total	570.120	299			

From the above table, we can interpret that there is an association between respondent's age and respondent's opinion about companies branding through social networking site being credible as ($P = 0.005 < 0.01$, Information available on SNW and the company website is reliable and accurate)($P = 0.048 < 0.05$, Employer value proportion can be evaluated through an employer's presence on digital platform)($P = 0.002 < 0.01$ companies which are active on SNW are credible).

Hypothesis 3

H₀: there is no significant relationship between respondent's age and respondent's opinion about job search through social networking site and company website being user friendly.

H_A: there is a significant relationship between respondent's age and respondent's opinion about job search through social networking site and company website being user friendly.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
It is easy to review and compare the employers online as we can navigate through different company websites	Between Groups	15.943	4	3.986	9.514	**.000
	Within Groups	123.587	295	.419		
	Total	139.530	299			
SNW and company websites are user friendly as they direct the candidate during search process	Between Groups	14.152	4	3.538	5.008	**.001
	Within Groups	208.418	295	.707		
	Total	222.570	299			

From the above table it can be inferred that there is a significant relationship between respondents age and respondent's opinion about job search through social networking site and company website being user friendly as ($P = .000 < 0.01$, it is easy to review a company through digital platform)($P = .001 < 0.01$, digital platform is easy for the job search process).

SUGGESTIONS

- Companies should focus internal marketing for its employees, to ensure that the workforce are informed about the organization products and services, various practices, work culture so that employees can promote about the same through the company website and social networking site in the form of blogs, videos etc.
- Companies engaged in online branding should strategies their promotion activities according to the age group and work experience of candidates they are looking for. As the statistical analysis clearly states the candidate's age and work experience has a major influence on the medium chosen by them for job search. Generation Y employees prefer digital platform for job search whereas generation X employees tend to depend on a job search through professional networking.
- Managers should consider using social networking site and try to make the company website to be more appealing as a major chunk of candidates who are generation Y employees prefer applying for a job or being associated with companies that have a strong presence on digital platform.

- Companies should make their company website to be more responsive to address to job applicant query so that the candidate has a better experience with the company during the job search process. This may help the company in the timely recruitment of candidates and also help in positive word of mouth publicity.
- It is observed that respondents prefer digital platform as it is user friendly, responsive, but still credibility and accuracy of information available on digital platform is ranked less compared to other aspects. Companies can work on changing the perception of respondents in terms of credibility by being consistent in terms of communicating about upcoming events, employees experience, work culture on a regular basis so that the company can be one of the well known brand at digital platform.
- Companies should encourage employees to share their experience with the employer on social networking site, focus on getting job applicants through their social network. This will help companies to cut down on their recruitment cost and at the same time help in promoting the company's brand name.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the outcome of the research we can conclude that with the revolution of digitalisation job applicants consider digital platform as one of the mediums for job search and also develop perceptions about employer brand based on the visibility of their company website and their presence on social networking site. Job applicant's perception towards using digital platforms and assessing the employer value proportion is mainly influenced by demographic factors. Job seekers rank digital platform on the basis of being user friendly and responsive and are still sceptical about company information available on digital platform to be reliable and credible. This is one aspect which the companies have to work on for improving the perception of job seekers in terms of credibility and also consider a digital platform as one of the prominent medium for employing branding.

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